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'IN ALL THESE THINGS'

THE history of a man in the world is the history of the interplay of three forces—that man, his world, and his God.

The World

THE world, is, in one view, a vast collection of facts and events: the sum of all which happens to us. From the point of view of human experience its outstanding characteristic is its givenness. We do not create it; often we do not wish it. We always find it given. It stands before each individual as a concrete datum, a massive unyielding fact. As such it cannot be escaped. Sometimes it can be altered, for the notion of a completely static environment is false, but for the most part it lies athwart our path in all its brute and inevitable actuality, demanding our acknowledgment.

The world that thus confronts us is not wholly good. There is beauty in it, and love, and many other admirable things, but there is evil in it too. It has its floods and fires, its plagues and famines, its sicknesses and deaths, and these are as real and objective as the world of which they are a part. And sometimes that world turns its evil side towards us, and visits upon us what we call calamities, tragedies, and sorrows. It is doing that today.

It is searing us with war. On some fronts that war is dormant, poised beneath an armed and precarious truce. In one front at least it has broken out in flame and thunder. And that war affects us tragically. It is driving a sharp and painful wedge between us.

It is forcing us to part, to sever the bonds of friendship, to break the ties of family. It is driving many of our number into military camps, not a few into battle, some into death. It cannot be denied: the world today is hostile, injurious, fearful, evil.

The Man

YET the history of a man, the value of a human life, cannot be wholly, or even primarily, defined in terms of the evil world he lives in. That world is but one, and that the least, of the factors that determine our estate. It is but the outer side of human history, the husk and hull of experience. There is, besides, the human spirit. That spirit is, or can be, greater than external happenings, more significant than the outer event, deeper and more determinative than circumstance.

There is that in man which enables him to arrange all facts within a moral framework, and so not only to extract

the fangs of evil fortune, but to turn it into good. There is a spiritual alchemy that is able to distil sweetness from the bitter, strength from violence, blessing from tragedy. For it must be plain to all that it is not what happens to us that counts, but how we stand up under that which happens to us. It is not what we must bear, but how we bear it that determines the value of our life. It is not primarily our suffering that is significant, but how we suffer and to what purpose. It is our reception of the world that largely determines its meaning and value. If amidst the vicissitudes of hostile fortune we preserve the integrity of our souls, each one of our experiences, however difficult and distasteful, can serve to mellow us and make us spiritually mature.

God

THE Stoics are there to prove that without Christ and Christianity a man can hold himself proudly erect amidst the buffetings of circumstance.

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Even the natural man can screw up his courage to the sticking point and thrust a defiant chin into the face of evil fortune. But when all is said and done that man and his world remain unreconciled, and the world at last will beat him to the ground.

It is not so with a man who is in Christ. The world may beat him down, indeed, but it is no longer the world that does it, but God, his loving and gracious Father. To those who are in Christ the world takes on a different form and visage, and another meaning altogether. Its buffetings now become chastening rods; its evils, benedictions. Even in its most threatening and destructive moods it is thoroughly sacramental. For God is behind it, and he stands there not in frowning wrath but in tender pity; not visiting his judgments upon the proud, but ministering in love to his servant's healing.

In this knowledge there is strength. We can hold our head erect, have poise, because we know that there are no evil providences, because we know that all things work together for good to those who are called according to His purpose. For us there are no ultimate calamities, no final tragedies. There are blessings only, goods to be worked into the fibre of our being. We are never outside the love of our Father.

For "who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay,

in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor things present, nor things to come nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

* * *

OUR boys are leaving us to fight, perhaps to die. Above us all hangs the threat of atomic death. As we part, each to go our way, to suffer and to endure we know not what, let us face life calmly and resolutely, not indeed in the proud confidence that we are impervious to fate, but in the sober assurance that no evil at all can befall those who love the Lord.—And let us pray for one another. Pray, not that we be taken out of the world, but that in the world we may keep the faith. Pray, not that we be kept from battle but that in the battle we quit ourselves like men. Pray, not that we save our life, but that if we must lose it, we may find a fuller life and more abundant.

—HENRY STOB

Our N.A.E. Dilemma?

by GEORGE STOB

THE Christian Reformed Church will again consider the question of the NAE membership when Synod meets in June.

The history of our eight-year membership in the NAE shows that we are not very much "at home" in that organization. We have never been really committed. Our differences have produced radical tensions.

It is true, however, that the American "evangelicals" are our brethren in Christ. We love, honor, and respect them as such. In some important things we have common cause with them. And in point of fact we are united in a common organization with them for common witness and action.

A Hard Question?

SHOULD we now withdraw? That is a hard question.

It is not a hard question because it is hard to find the answer. The answer

is perfectly clear. We must withdraw. The question is hard only because it requires a hard decision — the decision to "separate," to "break relations."

It would have been much easier to answer the question of 1943: Shall we join? But the church never had an opportunity to answer that one. Came the end of the 1943 Synod, and the Church stood before an accomplished fact. She *was* a member of the NAE. And when once we have become involved in a relation with others, it is hard to break away.

There are some who would make it even harder. For it has been said by proponents of our NAE membership that to withdraw would be "to deny or ignore our unity with all who are one with us in the Lord Jesus Christ." It has also been said that withdrawal from the NAE cannot be thought of "as anything else but criminal." (*The Banner*, Apr. 18, '47, p. 458; May 12, '44, p. 445; cf. *Acts* 1944, p. 329.)

That is our dilemma. To remain is to live in a strained relation with our brethren. To withdraw is said to be "denial of unity," and "criminal."

* * *

But perhaps the dilemma is more apparent than real.

For it is obviously wrong to say that by withdrawal from a formal organization we "deny or ignore our unity with our brethren in Christ. And to call it "criminal" is surely wrong.

These judgments would be right if our unity with "evangelicals" could come to expression only in an *association* of churches, and if Christian cooperation were possible only in a *common organization*. If that were really so we should have to join the World Council leaders in speaking about "our great sin of disunity."

But it is not so. The fact is that Christian brotherhood and cooperation come to expression even apart from organizational union, and transcend it.

Our own experience and history bear that out.

We are brothers to and we cooperate in the work of the Christian Gospel with the Missouri Synod Lutherans, without benefit of organizational association.

We are brothers to and we cooperate with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the Associate Presbyterian Church, even though we refused to enter into an *Alliance of Reformed Churches* with them in 1943 (*Acts* 1943, p. 142). This, incidentally, was the very year in which we joined the NAE; yet no one would ever say that we repudiated these churches while embracing the "evangelical" churches of the NAE.

We are brothers to and cooperate with the Reformed Church of America (even in matters of Christian education), notwithstanding the fact that that church is affiliated with Church Councils that we condemn and repudiate.

We were brothers to and we cooperated with American "evangelicals" before we joined the NAE. And we shall still be brothers to and we shall still cooperate with American "evangelicals" after we withdraw from the NAE.

And withdraw we must! There are many considerations which make withdrawal imperative. We concern ourselves here only with the basic consideration, which is given and discussed below.

Association Means Compromise

IT should be noted at the outset that we did not join the NAE merely in order to get or perform a number of "practical services." This was secondary.

Our big reason for joining the NAE was to unite in a *common witness*. Article 3 of the NAE Constitution declares that the purpose of the NAE is "to establish a common front for the promotion of evangelical truth against the inroads of heresy (commonly called modernism or liberalism)." That purpose was *the big thing* that brought us in and kept us there.

Through the years it has been emphasized, above all else, that in and through the NAE we were presenting "a united front for a common witness" against the great foes of "Secularism, Communism, Romanism, Liberalism;" that we

were here taking issue with the Federal Council, and battling with a "united front against the onslaughts of modernism;" and it has been suggested that this is "ultimately a matter of being counted in the struggle for or against Christ."

Our great NAE concern has been the "common witness," the "united voice."

One might well ask how much we increase our power against "Secularism, Communism, Romanism, Liberalism," when we oppose them with a common evangelical witness.

But a more serious and important question — one that concerns our very identity — is: *What does our association with other groups for common witness do to our Reformed witness?*

Now, if we associate with groups that are Reformed, so that we can accept and subscribe to each other's creeds, there is no difficulty. In such an association our Reformed witness remains intact, unimpaired.

But, when we unite for common witness with those who differ from us in basic beliefs, we are forced to level off with them to a "Common Denominator" witness in which we yield the *very things* that make us Reformed.

And that is precisely what our membership in the NAE means. At a given point and in a given area we have yielded our Reformed witness, and we have reduced to a "Common Denominator" witness. *Thus we have compromised. And thus we are compromising.*

Reformed or "Not-Reformed"

I TAKE it that we have only one witness to give. That is the Reformed witness. That is the faith delivered to us through the Scriptures and through the Providence of God in our history.

We have pledged to each other that we shall so witness. That is the meaning of our "Forms of Unity." We have pledged ourselves to God to bring this Reformed witness into the world. It is *our witness* for every place, for every time.

But we became members of the NAE. We subscribed with them to a seven-point "statement of faith." That statement has become in the NAE and through the NAE "our common witness."

Thus, by coming into the NAE, we have bound ourselves *in a given area*

and agency of witness to a curtailment of our Reformed witness. And in a given area and agency of witness we have limited ourselves to a "Common Denominator" witness. That is compromise.

This is made clear even by our strongest NAE proponents. For example, the following has been said in defense of the NAE statement of faith: "To be sure, it is not a statement of the *Reformed* faith; but this cannot be expected in an association whose avowed purpose is to '*represent the evangelical Christians of America in matters calling for unity of action.*'" (*Banner*, Sept. 3, 1943; cf. *Ibid*, Apr. 18, '47).

That is altogether right. The NAE statement of faith is NOT a statement of the REFORMED faith. That is to say, it is a witness that is NOT REFORMED.

The above quotation is also right in saying that "a statement of the Reformed faith . . . cannot be expected in an association" like the NAE. Exactly! To join the NAE means to join in a "not-Reformed" witness.

Association means compromise.

* * *

The Special Committee for the Study of Inter-Church Affiliation brings this very thing under strong judgment in its Report to the Synod of 1950 (Cf. *Acts* 1950, pp. 378-385). Take note of what this Committee, on the basis of its study of Scriptural principles, is led to say. It says: "Scripture, however, repeatedly stresses the fact, that whenever such cooperation is given, the purity of the message must be guarded; i.e., *nothing must be allowed to detract from the soundness of the testimony concerning the gospel.* Hence, if in *any phase* of our cooperation there should be danger that *our message would begin to lose its clear and Reformed emphasis*, and our warnings remain unheeded, such cooperation should cease." (*Acts* 1950, pp. 382f. My italics). The Scripture references given in support of this statement are: Gal. 2:11f; I Tim. 6:3; II Tim. 1:13; II Tim. 4:1; Titus 1:13, 14.

This Study Committee, confining itself to an abstract statement of principle, declares: "such cooperation should cease." In the concrete, as applied to our NAE membership, it must be said: Such cooperation in common witness is unwarranted and impossible. It should never have been undertaken. Eight years of

OUR N. A. E. DILEMMA? — Continued

NAE membership have clearly demonstrated its impropriety and impossibility. It is now high time to conclude and to decide concretely that "such co-operation should cease."

Association means compromise.

Compromise Even Within

WHEN we speak through the NAE to the world, we witness in terms of a statement of faith that is not-Reformed, "but evangelical in the broad sense." Thus we compromise our witness to the world.

But perhaps we do bring a strong and unimpaired witness into the NAE? We do not! We are forced to limit our witness even within.

One of our delegates to an NAE Convention reported his reactions, in part, as follows:

"There was enough difference of opinion on any number of subjects to ensure endless debate *if the delegates had been minded to stress the points on which they differed from one another.* On the contrary, *they constantly stressed those fundamentals of the Christian faith to which all true believers readily subscribed, to wit, those fundamentals which are so ably expressed in the association's statement of faith.*" (Banner, May 12, '44, p. 445. My italics).

Statements like that are found many times in the literature of the modern ecumenical movement. One would hardly suspect that we would make similar statements about ourselves with approval.

It is not too surprising, however. While we are in the NAE this is inevitable. Self-limitation by common consent is the inescapable by-product of common membership for common witness in terms of a "Common-Denominator" creed.

Association means compromise.

AND what is more, this compromise comes home to roost.

Our own people are being made subject to its spirit. Do not underestimate the reflex-influence of our NAE membership! Take note once of what, in addition to what is cited above, NAE advocates have been led to say to our people.

There has been much glorification of that truncated NAE "statement of faith."

Here, supposedly are the essentials, the real fundamentals of the Christian faith. The NAE "statement" is said to be superior to the Apostles Creed, which our people have always understood in terms of its exposition in Calvin's *Institutes* and the *Heidelberg Catechism*. The delegate report of 1945 declares: "These seven emphases in this statement of faith are we claim 'essential to truth's pattern and structure;' " yet none of them mentions the truth of God's free and sovereign grace.

There is more. One of our NAE advocates, speaking in defense of our membership in it, gives the assurance that the "evangelicals" of the NAE are "Christians who express their faith in different terms than we do," and declares that we have with them a "common faith, even though it does not find identical expression in all details." (Banner, Dec. 24, '43, p. 1100. My italics).

Another, commenting on an NAE Convention, acknowledged that there were "aberrations" and a failure to do justice to the sovereign character of God's saving grace. But, in defense of our membership, he says: "We are one with them in the deepest thing of the Christian religion — faith in the sin-atoning power of the cross of Christ." (Banner, May 12, '44, p. 445. My italics).

Here is the reflex of the NAE witness brought home to our people through our membership in the NAE. The un-theological and creedless spirit of American evangelicalism has been channelled through the NAE right into our very household. The NAE statement of faith is said to embrace the "essentials," the "fundamentals." But surely for the Calvinist the "deepest thing in the Christian religion" is the objective fact of God's sovereign grace, and not the subjective act of faith — even faith in the sin-atoning power of the cross. Nor is it true that the evangelical faith is the same as ours, the difference being only a matter of "terms" or a matter of "expression in details."

But this, virtually, is what our people are told.

THERE has, however, been some uneasiness among some of those who still favor membership in the NAE. One of them has said: "The real danger . . . is that we shall stress unity

more than truth; that we shall lose the keen edge of our interest in that which is distinctive in our faith and ideals; that we shall be satisfied with being merely 'evangelical' and care less or little for being Reformed, forgetting that the Reformed faith is not less but more evangelical than any other Christian creed because it stresses the sovereign grace of God more consistently than all others. The danger is real, especially because the tendency in our day, particularly in our land, is away from distinctiveness and strongly on that which men have in common. The emphasis today in every area of thought and action is on unity, not diversity; on similarities, not on differences; on the inter-denominational, rather than the denominational. This is the all-pervasive spirit of our times; few escape its influences." (Banner, May 28, '48, p. 676).

Even so! "Few escape its influences." Obviously we have not. In fact, we have invited this influence. We have even brought it home.

Association means compromise.

What of Our Confessions?

IF one wonders how — in a given area of witness — we could have exchanged our Reformed confessions for a "broadly evangelical statement of faith," the answer is not far off.

The NAE "statement of faith" is for the NAE and the world. We don't need it at home. In fact, since it is "not Reformed," we don't want it at home. For home use we have our Reformed confessions, and we are sometimes inclined to regard them as our private affair. This is close to theological relativism, I know, but we have not "escaped its influences."

We have with great frequency been comfortingly assured that "no one is asked to surrender any of his convictions," that "we do not surrender one iota of our Reformed truth," that co-operation does not require the compromising of any of our "denominational distinctives."

Thus, we can be vigorously Reformed at home while being innocuously evangelical abroad. And thus we keep our "distinctives" nicely insulated. We are told: "We believe it is our duty to combat their errors in our own circle. We grant them the right to combat what they regard as our errors in their circles."

(Banner, Apr. 18, '47, p. 484. My italics).

This seems to say: "When we gather in the NAE we'll stress only our agreements. When we get home, each to his respective 'circles,' we'll deal with our differences and combat each other's heresies." Thus our NAE membership virtually leads us to agree that we shall each keep our distinctives at home.

Perhaps we have contributed something to this notion about the private character of our creeds. We tend to emphasize the fact that they are "Forms of Unity," — the basis of a common faith on which we unite in our own communion. They are that, assuredly. But they are more! Our creeds are *our confession* — the confession that we as a Church are pledged to fling out into the world. That confession is our witness at home. It is also our witness abroad. We do not have the right to leave it home and exchange it for another when we go abroad. *The NAE "statement of faith" is not ours. Our "statement of faith" — for our own communion, and for our witness to and against evangelicals and modernists alike — is that which is set forth in our creeds.*

If it is to be that really, we must safeguard the complete independence of our full witness, and avoid any alliance that limits it at any time.

Association means compromise.

From Isolation to Extinction

IT is nothing short of remarkable that our membership in the NAE should be commended as the way out of isolationism, and as an agency through which to bring our witness into the American world.

It has been often and variously avowed that the NAE affords us an opportunity "to make a distinctive contribution to evangelical Protestantism in America"; that "in this organization we shall best be able to make that contribution effective"; that this is an opportunity to fulfill our "calling in this land of ours" and to bring the "message which America needs"; that the NAE offers an avenue by which the fervent concern of our fathers "to make our conception of Christianity known in the

American world . . . can to an extent be realized"; that withdrawal would be to follow a policy of isolationism which will play "directly into the hands of the modernist forces." (*Acts* 1946, p. 386; 1945, p. 281; 1948, p. 408; 1949, pp. 313, 350, 322).

To all of that two things:

1. If we were so handicapped and inept that we had no effective way of bringing our witness to the American world before NAE arrived, then up to 1943 our history must have been one of appalling failure. That is not so. To be sure, we might and should have been more aggressive in our witness. But we have not been quite helpless. Professor Berkhof's *Dogmatics* were a best-seller and widely used in evangelical circles before and without benefit of NAE. Writings produced by our men have made a considerable impact on the American religious world. The *Back to God Hour*, a denominational agency, makes a weekly impact on hundreds of American ministers and millions of American people. And these rate higher, I should think, than an annual or biennial witness at a Convention.

2. But notice! NAE is said to be our most effective avenue of witness to the American world.

But what happens when we join the NAE. This — We subscribe to a statement of faith which becomes our "Common Denominator" Witness. And then, through the NAE, we approach the American world with that — with a curtailed, a not-Reformed, a "Common Denominator" witness.

Is this the way out of isolation?

It is not!

It is the way to extinction.

Our fathers never prayed for this!

Postscript

LET it be said again and again that the heart of our calling to the American world is to bring to it the power of a full and undiluted Reformed witness. We can scarcely in good conscience unite for that purpose with those who do not share our Reformed convictions.

It is said that we face the Goliaths of Secularism and Modernism. And we are small.

But we do not increase either size or strength by taking the armor and the sword of Saul. They do not fit us. They hinder our freedom, limit our movement.

You are little, David.

Well, then, take your littleness, and your simple weapons; and enlarge yourself with a clear witness, courageous decision, and faith in God.

Then go, and fight the Goliaths of Modernism, Catholicism, Communism, Secularism.

You will find that you are not alone. There are others fighting the good fight of faith. The army of the Lord is large, and is fighting on many fronts.

* * *

All this is said with due respect and love to our evangelical brethren.

We do not profess to be better. We must leave that judgment wholly to God. But we do profess to be different, in some things basically different.

We shall serve our brethren best, and serve our world best, when we do so in the free and full exercise of our distinctive conviction and witness.

We do not deny that the American evangelicals have brought a wide, and in many respects a saving ministry to our America. But their witness is not our witness, nor their method our method. Let each be true to his own, as he shall have to answer to God. As we labor each in his own, we shall no doubt find ourselves laboring together insofar as we are truly one, in the larger community of faith. And in that same community we shall still teach and learn from each other.

As for ourselves, we have our particular calling to the American world. We have been and we are fulfilling it.

But we must do better, in response to the urgency of our times, and in the measure of our large calling.

How can we serve our world? How shall we move our Reformed heritage more fully out of our historic isolationism, and more fully into the life of our community?

We shall write of this in our next issue when we consider how and by what means the Christian Reformed Church may serve and fulfill its witness to our American world.

Unconditional Theology

by JAMES DAANE

IN a former article (Timeless Logic? April issue) I wrote of a Declaration drawn by the 1950 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches. This Declaration is an interpretation of the Covenant on the basis of a denial of Common Grace. The Declaration teaches that there are no "conditions" within the Covenant because God realizes his Covenant unconditionally. Rev. Herman Hoeksema and other Protestant Reformed ministers desire its official adoption at their 1951 Synod. They maintain that acceptance of conditions within the Covenant would be a surrender of the basic position of Protestant Reformed theology. The time would then have come to return to the Christian Reformed Church. Other Protestant Reformed ministers, however, insist that it is not un-Protestant Reformed to accept conditions within the Covenant.

In this same article I contended that on the basis of Protestant Reformed theology, Hoeksema is right and the protesting ministers wrong. I further submitted that the *basic* issue in their present controversy is not conditions within the Covenant but a position that lies behind both conditions and common grace and necessitates the denial of both.

The Basic Issue

THIS prior position has to do with the *method* God employs in his dealings with men. Hoeksema insists that God deals with men unconditionally; he denies that God ever works with men in terms of conditions. In a discussion with Schilder over the meaning of the word "conditions," Hoeksema gives his own definition of the word. "A condition is a prerequisite which one must fulfill or comply with in order to receive something or to have something done unto him." (*Standard Bearer*, Feb. 15, 1951, p. 222.) This, contends Hoeksema, is the only acceptable definition of a "condition," and in this sense of the word, conditions do not enter into God's method of dealing with men.

To avoid misunderstanding it must be stated that none of the Protestant Reformed ministers desire to interpret man's fulfilling conditions in the Ar-

minian manner. None teach that man must fulfill conditions by his own power. Each grants that man fulfills the conditions by means of power given by God. But Hoeksema urges that even this interpretation of conditions is Arminian. It is Arminianistic to believe that God says to the regenerated individual: If you believe, I will save you.

This denial that God ever uses this method in dealing with men means that in Hoeksema's definition of God's method of dealing with men, God's successive responses and actions are never conditioned by what man does. In his thought, God's responses and actions are eternally decided *out of all relationship to what man does in time*. At this point it already becomes clear that in Hoeksema's theology eternity remains aloof from time, that God's works never seriously recognize, enter, and become involved in the temporal-historical process.

I submit that this is the position that lies behind the denial of conditions within the Covenant and behind the denial of common grace. It is this position that determines the special features of Protestant Reformed theology.

Can Conditions Be Avoided?

THIS conception of the method God uses in dealing with men accounts for the heavy preference of Protestant Reformed theology for the Supralapsarian position. Hoeksema is a strong believer in confessional theology. Yet in spite of the fact that the Canons of Dordt, the Belgic Confession, and the Heidelberg Catechism are all Infralapsarian, Hoeksema prefers the Supralapsarian position. The reason is not hard to discover. In the Infra position, Redemption is contingent upon the historical reality of the Fall. Hoeksema objects that this makes Redemption look like "repair work." In the Supra position Redemption rests less upon the historical Fall, than upon God's eternal decision to glorify himself through the salvation of the elect and the damnation of the reprobate. Thus Redemption—which is impossible apart from sin—is made to rest more securely upon the eternal decree of God than upon the

condition of sin in the temporal-historical process.

Even the most ardent Supra, however, cannot completely avoid recognition of conditions. The sin-situation within time is surely a condition produced by man. Thus, even in working Redemption, God must reckon with conditions. To insist at this point that God's method of working with men is always unconditional, would lead to the absurd position that God could redeem even if there were no sin-condition to redeem. If in the initiation of salvation God recognizes and works with the sin-condition, why object to God's recognition and operation with conditions in the salvation process of the elect individual?

Again, even the most ardent Supra admits that God does not damn the reprobate exclusively on the basis of his decree to do so, but on the basis of the reprobate's sins. Even Hoeksema does not place election and reprobation on the same level. But if sin is the condition for the reprobate's condemnation, why object to the idea that God operates conditionally with the reprobate in the historical process. If at any point God's responses are conditioned by man's action in history, the construction of an unconditional theology would seem to be a dubious venture.

What of the Covenant?

HOEKSEMA's denial that God ever works with man in terms of conditionality, explains his narrow definition of the Covenant. The essence of the Covenant is said to be fellowship with God. But Hoeksema denies that the Covenant may also be defined as a historical method for the realization of this fellowship.

His argument at this point is interesting and indicative of his initial position. The essence of the Covenant is said to be *eternal*. Therefore, the Covenant cannot be defined as a means to an end. A "means" is temporal and incidental; when the "end" is achieved, the means is dropped. Therefore, the Covenant may not be regarded as a *method*.

It should be carefully noted that the Covenant is defined in terms of its *eternal* essence. The fact that God establishes it in time and history, thereby giving it an historical structure means nothing. A definition of the Covenant should give its meaning. In Hoeksema's definition of the Covenant the historical aspect of the Covenant does not enter into the definition. The historical aspect of the Covenant means nothing.

It would seem that a definition of the Covenant exclusively in terms of its eternal essence, out of all reference to its temporal-historical aspect, is rendering the temporal-historical less than its due. If the essence of the Covenant is so eternal that the historical aspect is incidental, then the historical interaction between God and man within the Covenant is also incidental. And if the history that transpires within the Covenant is incidental, how much more the history that transpires outside the Covenant!

Hoeksema writes, "An everlasting covenant, therefore, is not a way or a means, but is the destination, the end itself" (*Standard Bearer*, Nov. 15, 1949). In this definition the word "everlasting" is curiously equated with "eternity" to the exclusion of the temporal. It seems to have escaped notice that the Covenant as "everlasting" does not mean that it is *only* eternal. It is *also* temporal.

It is only when the Covenant is defined as something eternal *without* reference to the temporal, that the Covenant can be only a "destination" and not a "way" to that destination. When the Covenant is defined as "the end itself," then of course no temporal-historical means are required to reach the "end." If the "end" is given at the beginning then no temporal process is needed as a method of arriving at the

end. If it is insisted that the essence of the Covenant is eternal, then time can make no essential difference to it nor possess any serious validity for it.

The Covenant of Works

As is well known, Hoeksema denies the doctrine of the Covenant of Works. The reason is as follows: In the generally accepted formulation of the Covenant of Works, God deals with man conditionally. God says to Adam, If you fulfill the condition of obedience, I will give to you eternal life. Because God's method of dealing with Adam here rests on a *condition*, Hoeksema rejects the Covenant of Works.

These is another reason, which is not really another, but rather another aspect of the same reason. Hoeksema insists that Adam stood by virtue of his *creation* in a covenant relationship to God. To maintain that God *after* creation established a Covenant with Adam would mean that the Covenant was established at some point in the temporal-historical process. This Hoeksema cannot allow, for then the Covenant is not eternal but temporal, not unconditioned but in its very nature involved in conditionality. Here again it appears that "eternality" and "unconditionality" go together — drop one and you must drop the other; and that "conditionality" and the "temporal-historical" go together — drop one of these terms and the other also goes. An unconditional theology cannot retain the significance of the temporal-historical.

Common Grace?

SINCE the Covenant is in essence fellowship, and since its temporal nature is no essential part of it, the reprobate

(although born under it) are not, in Hoeksema's view, *in* the Covenant. Therefore, the reprobate and the elect have nothing in the Covenant in common, and consequently there is no Common Grace. There is no room for Common Grace in a theology that defines the Covenant in terms of eternity and places the historical reprobate outside the eternal Covenant.

The same contention that God never deals with men in terms of conditions, necessitates Hoeksema's denial of the "offer of salvation." Hoeksema denies not only a *general* offer of salvation; he also denies that God offers salvation to the elect. God never offers salvation; He himself works salvation. God alone fulfills the Covenant.

* * *

It is difficult to see how any Protestant Reformed minister can plead for the recognition of conditions within the Covenant since they stand committed to the Protestant Reformed position that God never offers salvation, not even to the elect.

Their present discussion about the possibilities of recognizing conditions within the Covenant should lead Protestant Reformed theologians to critically reconsider that basic position from which the special features of their theology stem.

If God is to work in time and history must not the very nature of his method be conditioned by the nature of the temporal-historical? This is the question that Protestant Reformed theology must face. Until they answer this question, their present confusion about conditions will persist.

"What do I love when I love God? Not beauty of bodies, nor the fair harmony of time nor the brightness of the light so gladsome to our eyes, nor sweet melodies of varied songs, nor the fragrant smell of flowers and ointments and spices, not manna and honey, not limbs acceptable to embracements of flesh. None of these I love when I love my God. And yet I love a kind of light, and melody, and fragrance, and meat, and embracement, when I love

my God — the light, melody, fragrance, meat, embracement of my inner man: where there shineth unto my soul what space cannot contain, and there soundeth what time beareth not away, and there smelleth what breathing disperseth not, and there tasteth what eating diminisheth not, and there clingeth what satiety divorceth not. This is it which I love when I love my God".

— St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.),
Confessions, X, vi, 8.

The Junior College Problem

by HENRY ZYLSTRA

SYNOD did a fine thing when it instructed its Committee on Junior Colleges last spring to give wide distribution to a digest of that Committee's Report. The Report can be found in the *Acts* of 1950. Synod hoped that a digest of it would "foster discussion of the problem." That digest has now come out in the form of a 13-page pamphlet entitled *Are We Ready for Junior Colleges?* Discussion is therefore due, and what follows is a contribution to that.

The Committee's stand is pretty well pointed up in the title of the digest: *Are we ready?* Presumably this may be taken to mean that the Committee has no objection in principle to the establishment of Junior Colleges. It thinks, however, that there are certain conditions which we must meet before we can start breaking ground, and it asks us whether we are ready to meet those conditions now.

Some attention to those conditions will show at once that the Committee's stand is well taken. In the interest of economy of statement, I single out the main ones, and phrase them in my own way. In substance they come to this:

Do we know what kind of institutions we want these Junior Colleges to be?

Are we sure that establishing them will not jeopardise the vigorous development of Calvin College and Seminary?

Can we pay for them?

I limit comment this time to the first of those conditions. The thrust of it is that before we set up Junior Colleges we must have a common conviction about what kind of educational units we want them to be. This is an ideal, as distinguished from a practical, consideration, but one hopes that nobody will ride rough-shod over it, in order to get at once to the problem. Can we pay for it? The Committee rightly asks us what sort of institutions we want these Junior Colleges to be. It wants to be sure, in other words, that we can justify the schools we set up — can justify them, that is, on the basis of the Reformed idea of Christian higher education. It knows that unless we can, and unless we do, our Junior Colleges are

likely to become "glorified high schools," or "mere aping of typical American educational trends."

The Junior College as Normal Training School

THE Committee found, for instance, that when it came to inquire which areas of our community were most vocal in their call for Junior Colleges, these turned out to be the areas in which there was a Christian teacher shortage. The hope was, apparently, that the proposed institutions could be made to supply that need. Behind this, it may be, lay the experience that when promising young people went off to Calvin College, they stayed on four years, and then, as likely as not, they preferred the advantages of urban salary and circumstance, and never, as loyal natives, returned to carry on at home.

Now there is no denying the seriousness of what we call the "shortage" of Christian teachers. It is bad in the urban centers, worse in the rural reaches. The problem needs solution. We shall all have to express our devotion, thought, and practicality to solving it. The teacher generally, and the Christian teacher particularly, is caught on the edge of a "business civilization," and he, more than any other professional person, has trouble keeping his economic balance there. But whatever the causes for the shortage, the solution for the Reformed people, who, as the Committee puts it, should "take *seriously* the essential character" of Christian education, cannot be the establishment of Junior Colleges designed to serve as two-year normal training schools.

Why not? For this reason: two years of professional normal training added to a high school liberal education are not an adequate preparation for a Christian teacher. The point is that if the teaching is to be Christian the teacher must himself be thoroughly educated. It is the quality of his own education, quite as much as the quality of his Christianity, that makes him a Christian teacher. Some of us may think sometimes that all we want in a Christian teacher is a Christian personality who has some teaching

techniques. But what we invite by that mistaken sense of the thing is indeed a Christian personality on the one hand and some pedagogical skills on the other, but a neutral educational content lying between. This cannot be called Christian education. It must in fact be called secularism in education, no less so because it is conducted under evangelical auspices.

No, it is the teacher's education itself, its substance, its content, its quality that must be Christian. This education cannot be mainly practical; it must be mainly ideal. It cannot be mainly "professional"; it must be mainly philosophical. It cannot be mainly technical; it must be mainly normative. It cannot be mainly "applied"; it must be mainly scientific, liberal, universal. It is only so that the teacher's education can be made recognizably *Christian* and *education* at one and the same time. A personal devotion to Christ is of course indispensable to the teacher. So is a personal gift for teaching. So is "professional" training. But the thing that makes the Christian in the teacher's training educationally significant is his scientific mediation of life and reality. This is hard philosophical and moral work. It must be general, not fragmentary. It must be thorough, not superficial. It must be followed through into the concrete; it cannot remain a theoretical profession. It must be real. It requires five rather than two years beyond high school: four for the liberal base, one for the professional application. That way lies the avenue to distinctiveness in our Christian schools.

The Committee asks, Are we ready? We are not ready if we want the schools we set up to serve as normal training institutes for high school graduates.

The Junior College as Vocational School

THERE are, of course, other motivations underlying the occasional call for Junior Colleges. There is the feeling, for instance, that not everybody is by caliber, gift, and interest the sort of person who is destined to occupy a position of leadership in the community. The question arises, consequently, wheth-

er everybody can benefit equally from such a traditionally conceived, four-year course of liberal arts and sciences as is offered at Calvin College. The idea is that since we cannot all be ministers, missionaries, professors, scientists, doctors, lawyers, and the like, we ought not all to be subjected to the hard program of intensive liberal studies leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree. The thought is that such uniformity works out badly for both the unusual and the average students. And so the notion suggests itself that the regional Junior College might serve fruitfully for just "average" students. After all, our boys and girls get through high school early, business and industry are in no desperate need of them, and two of the years before marriage and the job can perhaps be usefully spent at school.

Something like that is precisely the course that the growing "community college" trend in our country will probably take. Such a college would be a junior college for the most part "terminal" — that is, looking to no further education beyond. It would be an education mainly slanted to the practical and applied, to the vocational and technical. Whatever of liberal or normative, of ideal or philosophical, of moral or scientific remained in it would be general rather than intensive. In view of the considerable pressure for something like this, the Synodical Committee asks us, Do we want to go along with this trend?

Now there is no denying that we shall all have to look into the matter of "democracy in education" more realistically than we have yet done. The fact is that some students are excellent and that some are average. And there can be no question that the few sometimes suffer from an educational system intended for the many, and that the many sometimes suffer from an educational system intended for the few. We have a duty to the excellent, to those appointed to fulfill callings of highly responsible leadership. We have a duty also to the others: our Christian idea of man commits us at least to equal *opportunity* for all. Every man has a right to as much formal schooling as can really shape and form him as a man.

But if we infer from these propositions that we had better send the excellent students to Calvin College for a thorough liberal discipline, and the others to terminal two-year Christian trade schools, we are wrong on two counts. The first is that the average student is also a man, a woman — *that*

rather than a mechanic, stenographer, lathe-operator, draughtsman, book-keeper, or comptometrist — and also therefore requires the scientific shaping by the nature of reality which we call liberal education. The second is that a Christian trade school cannot be very significantly Christian. Presumably there can be no objection, if plenty of money is available, to conducting merely technical and vocational schools under Christian auspices. As schools go, this would represent the maximum amount of expenditure for the minimum amount of Christian quality in the education. This is of course not to argue that there is no room for vocational training in the Reformed idea of education: it is to argue only that man's needs as man govern his needs as technician, and that attention to the latter cannot make up for neglect of the first.

The appalling dualism in our society by and large, between the ideal and the practical, the normative and the utilitarian, the ends and the means — this dualism, hallmark as it is of that retirement of religion from life which we call secularity, should warn us not to set up Junior Colleges designed to be vocational training schools. And this is no less true just because we mean to add a little art, and music, and literature for "cultural" garnish to a meal whose staple is stenography, shop, and book-keeping.

The Junior College as a Terminal Liberal College

THIS leaves, however, the other possibility: Junior colleges designed to be terminal, yes, but so far from being mainly vocational, they would be conducted so as to give the many a *general* as distinguished from an *intensive* liberal education. The distinction now, be it noted, is not between a liberal and a professional or technical education. The education is assumed to be liberal, philosophical, normative. The distinction is between such an education being general and being intensive.

To Junior Colleges so conceived and dedicated nobody presumably could, on the basis of the Christian idea of man and his education, enter principal objections. Some might be inclined to say, and might show some causes for maintaining, that a liberal education must be intensive in order to succeed at all. All the same, we would seem to be on solid Christian ground if we take the position that all those who wish it, the

average many too, are entitled to so much of a grasp of the great outlines of knowledge as will fit them, to the extent of their capacity, to know what the Christian interpretation of life and reality is.

Any objections to Junior Colleges of this kind would probably be of a practical kind. One such practical difficulty, perhaps not insurmountable, deserves stressing. We must not suppose that, educationally speaking, it is any easier to give average students a general education than it is to give excellent students an intensive one. The scholars-teachers who do this work must be as good as scholars, as good as teachers, for the one purpose as for the other. Ideally such teachers and such students should have the benefit of a "universal seat of learning." They ought to have the benefit of a "university" tradition of knowledge which is the product of a company of scholars working under one governing philosophy at one place over a long period of time. Thus, to put it concretely, it would be a mistake to assume that such a terminal general college, being more elementary, could be served by "assistants" or people less thoroughly trained than the professors at Calvin. If at Calvin too "assistants" and "instructors" are sometimes used on the lower levels, we must remember that this is less than ideal, and also that an assistant working in the company of mature and experienced professors is not the same as assistants cut from such continuous "university" contact. In this way, also, therefore, the threat of attenuating the quality of the education is real. The Committee's warning against a "glorified high school" continues pertinent.

What do we want these Junior Colleges to be? One possibility remains. It is related to the last preceding one, and is the most defensible of all on the basis of a Christian philosophy of education. It is

The Junior College as Basic Liberal College

IF that is what we want, no objection on the score of principle is possible. This is but to say that what we want is the first two years of Calvin College, conceived of and conducted just as Calvin College conceives of and conducts them, but we want them locally instead of at Grand Rapids. We want them locally in the interest of extending home contact and influence, and in the

interest also, if possible, of reducing the cost.

To such colleges, too, what objections there are, are practical objections, though it is just worth pointing out that those practical objections are *educational*, not merely monetary. The chief educational difficulty is this one: Would the quality of the Christian education in the basic college, separated as it would be from the senior college, still be a substantial quality? Again it must be said that it is no easier to put the "Christian" into the higher education of underclassmen. It is no easier to interpret General European History for freshman from a Christian interpretation than it is to interpret Balkan History Since 1914 for seniors that way. It is no easier to make a sophomore survey course in English Literature a Calvinistically defined course than it is to make an advanced course in the poet Browning the same thing. Solid learning, a ripe com-

mand of fields of knowledge, a disciplined Christian maturity, and something also of that "tradition of scholarship" referred to above, that "university" atmosphere — these are the things that should reach down from the senior into the basic college, lest the latter cease to be a college. It is for these reasons, perhaps, that the Committee in its specific recommendations counsels that, if and when we are ready for Junior Colleges, we should keep them closely affiliated with Calvin College and Seminary. Perhaps such affiliation can be made educationally real. The point at the moment is that we must be sure it can be made so *before we are ready*.

* * *

MY point in this piece has been that in answer to the Synodical Committee's question, *Are We Ready?*, we must reach common conviction about what we want the Junior Colleges to be. We

should all want them to be mainly liberal, or we shall not know how to make them significantly Christian.

That takes us to the Committee's second major condition: Are we sure that the establishment of Junior Colleges will not jeopardise the further vigorous development of Calvin College and Seminary? I shall probe into that next time, but by way of introduction I tell a story now.

There was once a farmer who hired a man and put him to work at stacking hay. The farmer laid down only one principle for doing the job right. "Just keep the center solid and full," he said, "and the sides will take care of themselves." The principle holds good for our problem of higher education also. If we keep the center of Calvin College and Seminary solid and full, the sides of our grammar schools, high schools, and possibly Junior Colleges will take care of themselves. In fact, we should talk and plan University at the same time that we talk and plan Junior Colleges.

Mark Hopkins and the Textbook

by HARRY W. JELLEMA*

THERE is an old and sententious definition of school to the effect that a school is Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and an apt pupil on the other.

If we today on occasion still quote the adage, we do so only humorously. As for the log, to the average American, school means a building which, if not palatial, is at least a long way from being primitive; a building that incorporates the latest idea on lighting and heating and ventilation; a building with offices and laboratories and cafeteria; a building equipped with adjustable seats, with lockers, with projection machine. And as for Mark Hopkins and the pupil, today school means an organized and as far as possible variegated curriculum, counseling and guidance, aptitude tests, report cards and hours of credit, a classified flock of pupils, and a battery of teachers each of whom is some kind of specialist. And of course school means textbooks.

I intend no ridicule. Nor do I mean to suggest that all our contemporary

elaboration of the media of education is bad or unnecessary or even dubious. I mean only to remind ourselves that however admirable or necessary any or all such elaboration may be, the truth of the old adage remains. What makes a school is a real teacher and an apt pupil. With all else one can dispense, if need be; but without Mark Hopkins and the scholar, all the rest is not a school.

Even when so interpreted the old aphorism will strike the average American, and also the average American teacher, as a rash exaggeration. No doubt, Hopkins and his pupil can constitute a school though there is, for example, no playground equipment, and though Hopkins has no carpeted office. But surely Hopkins and the pupil will at least need a textbook? And especially Hopkins? Without a textbook as guide, how would he go about teaching arithmetic or grammar or history or psychology or manual training? With what

would he begin? And after the second week, what would he still have to say? Or, on the other hand, his head perhaps jam-packed with knowledge, how would he know when he had said enough? Without a textbook, how would he know what is relevant and what is not? How would he know where the course he is teaching fits in with the rest of what the pupil has learned or is yet to learn in school? And how his course is expressive of a general philosophical and religious commitment, and what contribution to the latter his course is supposed to make? Without a text, how would Hopkins know whether in his course he should teach facts, primarily, or skills or rules or laws, or how much of each? And where would he obtain problems and exercises for the pupil? How would he know how to adapt the subject matter to his pupil's level? Or

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what is the best way to present it? Or how to awaken the pupil's interest, and by the material contribute to disciplining the pupil's mind and personality?

In short, can there be a school if Hopkins has no textbook?

Again, I intend no ridicule. Nor do I mean to suggest that the textbook or the use of a textbook is bad or un-

necessary or even dubious. I mean simply to raise a question, and as far as possible to insure that in the raising of it I am, whether in one direction or another, not prejudiced by what happens to be contemporary educational practice and (largely) uncriticized custom.

The average American takes text-

books for granted. Whether teacher or plain citizen, he assumes that textbook is part of the definition of school. Without prejudice to his assumption, I should like to have him think on the question, What is a textbook?

Granted the pupil and Mark Hopkins, how does a textbook come to be? What is its function? What is a textbook?

WHAT DID 1928 SAY?

by HENRY STOB

WHAT is the stand of the Christian Reformed Church on Movie Attendance, Dancing and Card Playing?

It has a stand on these, just as it has stand on Divorce, Lodge Membership, Labor Unions, Birth Control and a number of other things.

It took its stand in 1928. At that time Synod adopted a set of Seven Resolutions on worldliness and worldly amusements, resolutions in which the Church's attitude towards the Movies, the Dance and Card Playing came to official expression.

What, then, is its stand? That question has frequently been asked — sometimes by people outside the denomination; more often by members within it — but the answers have not always been clear and they have many times been at variance.

Obscurity

THIS is due, at least in part, to the Resolutions themselves. They are not perfectly plain in every part; at certain critical junctures they become ambiguous. In consequence of this they fail to convey a single unmistakable meaning. They mean one thing to one person and another thing to another; one man interprets them this way and another interprets them that way; one consistory understands them thus and another understands them so. They are simply not understood in the same sense by all.

This is unfortunate, for thereby their full impact upon the lives of the people is lost. They were meant to unite us in an all-out fight against the evil world; they were meant to form us in solid ranks against an encroaching secular-

ism. This they have not done. They have, to be sure, not completely failed, but neither have they succeeded as they ought. The ambiguities in the Resolutions have raised unanswered questions on important points of practical morality; they have fostered hesitancy and indecision in many quarters; and they have led to no small amount of confusion and perplexity.

What is more, the Resolutions have sometimes worked divisively. They have at times made enemies of brothers who differed in their interpretations of 1928 while professing with equal loyalty and candor their fullest agreement with the Church's stand. In consistorial practice the ambiguities in the Resolutions have sometimes made for halting irresolution and then again for sharply differing conceptions of what constitutes offensive conduct. In this way the unity of our disciplinary system has been compromised, and unwholesome suspicions and recriminations have been engendered.

This ought not to be. Everything points to the necessity and desirability of Synod's declaring in the plainest possible language precisely what is implied in the Resolutions of 1928. Such a declaration will do much to clear the atmosphere and to get us back to where our real differences, if they exist at all, can be met frontally and without disguise.

Call for Clarification

THE call for such a declaration or clarifying statement is old. The first call came in 1932, just four years after

the Resolutions were adopted. In that year Classis Muskegon requested Synod to clarify its stand on Card Playing in order, as the overture said, "that there shall be no room for doubt as to what the idea of our Synod is and what the consistories and leaders are expected to do in the matter." Twelve years later, in 1944, Classis Grand Rapids South in an address to Synod relative to the decision on Amusements noted the existence of a "widespread feeling that these decisions are the result of a compromise," and urged that something be done to achieve clarity and unity. Again in 1949, another classis, Classis Chicago South, requested Synod to clarify, adding: "We will do well to clarify these decisions because history has proved that there is uncertainty as to just what the decisions imply." A similar request was made in the same year by the Synodical Youth Committee, which asked quite pointedly: "Is the decision of 1928 advisory or legislative?"

Committee and Mandate

IT was in response to the last two overtures that, in 1949, Synod appointed a Committee to "clarify" the Church's stand. It did this for a very good and a very simple reason: the Church's stand was obscure to many. Since this state of affairs could not be allowed to continue because of the confusion and disunity it bred, Synod appointed a Committee to set forth in perfect plainness just what the Church had said in 1928.

The Committee's mandate was simple and direct. The Committee was not to

WHAT DID 1928 SAY? — Continued

change or modify the Church's position in any essential. It was to make no evaluation of the Church's stand; it was to pass no judgment upon its soundness or unsoundness; it was simply to "clarify" and, if necessary, to "amplify" the stand. Nothing more. It had to answer only one question: What in fact is the stand of the Church on Worldliness, more particularly on Worldly Amusements, more particularly still on Movie Attendance, Dancing and Card Playing? It had to answer the single question: What precisely do the Resolutions of 1928 say?

The Report

THE Committee appointed to answer this question, having been at work two years, will report to the Synod of 1951. The Committee is divided. Of the nine members constituting it, a majority of five is making one report, and a minority of four is making another. The majority report is signed by Henry J. Kuiper, William Kok, Nicholas J. Monsma, John Breuker and Leonard Greenway. The minority report is signed by Gerrit Hoeksema, John Vander Ploeg, Egbert R. Post and Henry Stob.

Behind their differences there is, of course, a very wide area of agreement. Both reports note that the Church in 1928 rose determinedly to meet the challenge of a menacing worldliness. Both recognize that Synod condemned worldliness without reserve and that it based its condemnation squarely upon the doctrinal and ethical principles derived from the Scriptures. Both agree that Synod deplored the increasing prevalence among us of movie going, dancing and card playing, and that it urgently warned our members against them. Both report that Synod saw in Prayer, Scripture Study and Christian Works the chief antidote to worldliness, and that Synod was concerned above all else to see in the members of the Church a genuine deepening of the spiritual life. Both observe that because of the rising tide of worldliness Synod wanted only those in positions of leadership who were sensitive to its threat and who would warn unceasingly against it. Both recognize that Synod wanted consistories neither to admit to full membership

those whose determination to lead the life of Christian separation and consecration was in doubt, nor to leave undisciplined those who after repeated admonition continued to be chargeable with offensive conduct in the matter of amusements.

In short, both reports agree in their perception of the broad general thrust of the decisions: Both see in Synod's Resolutions a solemn protest against secularism, an unqualified condemnation of worldliness, and a fixed determination to combat these on all fronts with every weapon in the arsenal of Christianity. Both reports agree also in their perception of the more specific intent of the decisions: Both see in Synod's Resolutions a declaration condemning worldliness in the field of amusements, more particularly a declaration condemning worldliness as it commonly manifests in theatre attendance, dancing and card playing.

The reports differ, however, on one point. It is a single point, but it is important. It concerns the inherent moral status of the three practices specifically mentioned in the Resolutions. The question that divides the committee is: Did the Synod of 1928 say that movie attendance, card playing and dancing are invariably and necessarily sinful, or did it not? The majority maintains that Synod did so say. The minority maintains that Synod did not so say. This is the only point in dispute between them.

To get the point in proper focus it is necessary to understand precisely what is meant by card playing, dancing and movie attendance. By "movie attendance" is meant the going to a commercial movie house for the purpose of viewing upon the screen a "story" played by professional performers and produced by the modern motion picture industry for the entertainment of the general public. By "dancing" is meant the joining publicly and with individual members of the opposite sex in the so called social dance. By "card playing" is understood the playing of any or all card games socially, with or without money stakes.

The Majority

ACCORDING to the majority, the three amusements, so defined, are absolutely condemned by the Resolutions

of 1928. Synod is represented as saying: You may not under any circumstances dance, go to the movies or play cards. To do so is incompatible with a Christian profession. Commitment to Christ requires total abstinence from these amusements. They are simply, pervasively and unqualifiedly worldly. Engagement in them, however infrequent and selective is Sin. Such engagement therefore is strictly prohibited. No one may be admitted into the Church who is not determined to separate himself completely from these practices; no one may remain a member who after repeated admonitions continues to engage in them.

According to this representation three areas of life and practice are mapped out into which no Christian may legitimately enter. An inviolable law of conduct marks them as forbidden. Concerning them the individual may not make an independent judgment; the liberty that he has in Christ does not pertain to these, for they lie completely within the evil world. Being bound to Christ, the Christian is not free to choose for worldliness; he is therefore not free to choose for Rook and Flinch for these are worldly, sinful—always and per se evil.

The Minority

THE minority denies that Synod said this. It finds nothing in the resolutions to justify the conclusion that Synod regarded the three amusements as in themselves, under all circumstances, necessarily sinful. It denies that Synod made a catalogue of sins. It points out, in fact, that in the only commentary given by Synod on the Resolutions of 1928, a commentary given in 1932, Synod declared that "it is the policy of Reformed Church Government not to itemize and catalogue a list of particular sins."

What then did Synod do? Did it approve a limited and judicious participation in the three amusements? No, neither did it do this. There exists no synodical rule prohibiting all participation in the three amusements; but also there exists no declaration permitting such participation. Synod made no pronouncement either way. It was concerned neither to draw up a catalogue of sins nor to justify a minimal indulgence in the three amusements. It neither forbade nor approved participation.

What Synod did was to utter a strong protest against worldliness and to raise a sharp warning cry against its insidious power. It warned, specifically against movies, cards, and dancing, partly because these have long been suspect in the Reformed communion, partly because in their modern form these were recognized as posing a particularly dire threat to true spirituality. Synod felt that unless the Church's attention was called to these it would be caught off guard and fall easy prey to the prevailing worldly spirit that breathed in them.

It urged the Church, therefore, to erect on every front very strong defenses against the reigning secularism and urged especially that by Prayer, Scripture Study, and Christian Works the members build up inner resistance to its destructive force. It stressed the necessity we are under, as children of God, to shun worldliness everywhere, and to be especially alert to it in our

leisure hours. It proclaimed that in every area of our life, in our amusements as in all other things, we are bound not to proceed carelessly, rashly, insensitively, but are bound in every instance prayerfully to consider whether what we propose to do is consonant with a life of Christian consecration.

This then is the essence of the Synodical Resolutions. The minority puts it this way: "We submit that we have here a Synodical declaration condemning worldliness in general, more particularly worldliness in the field of amusements, and still more specifically worldliness as it so commonly manifests itself in theater attendance, card playing, and dancing. With this intent, viz. to condemn worldliness, and in view of the fact that the familiar trio are especially dangerous and potent vehicles of worldliness, Synod not only greatly deplored the increasing prevalence among us of these forms of amusement, but also

urgently warned our members against them" (Agenda, 1951, p. 61)

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Between the majority and minority interpretations of the Church's stand the Synod of 1951 must choose. The churches will not be served if a decision is postponed. Such action would but prolong the tensions and continue the confusions and perplexities for the removal of which the committee on clarification was appointed. When a decision in the matter is reached, then the material question of the rightness or wrongness, the adequacy or inadequacy of the Church's stand can be discussed and determined. Meanwhile the committees look to the churches and its people to judge where on the issue before us the real truth lies.

In the next issue of this Journal I hope to examine some of the implications of the majority and minority positions.

COMMUNISM -- God's Servant?

by LEONARD VERDUIN*

THESE two things don't seem to belong together. Communism, essentially godless, is by its very nature the enemy of God. How then is it possible to suggest that it might be in the relation of a servant of God?

John Calvin thought it possible, and did put the two together. What is more significant, the Bible frequently speaks of wicked powers as servants in God's employ.

The hitch, of course, is that not all God's servants are willing servants. Not all God's servants are pious servants. Some have been downright wicked.

Calvin on "Communism"

NOT all will be familiar with the passage from Calvin in which he calls Communism an item in God's administration. To the best of my knowledge, it has never been translated into English. It occurs in his tract *Contre la Secte des Libertins*.

I translate: "We have seen how these awful people profane marriage, mingling men and women like brute beasts as their lust leads them . . . Now, so as not to leave any order among men, they

commit a similar confusion as to property, saying that the communion of the saints consists in no one possessing anything as his own, and each taking what he can . . . And in fact it is not to be doubted that our Lord permits this and, as it were, loosens the leash of Satan so as to rouse up such furious ones . . . in order to punish the ingratitude of those who abuse these things."

Thereupon Calvin recites a long list of economic sins of his day. It is to punish these specific evils that God permits the devil to bring forth such *tisons d'enfer* (sparks of hell).

We will have to disagree quite emphatically with much that Calvin writes in this tract. The "awful people" he assails existed mostly in his own mind. No doubt his evaluation of the Anabaptists, for it is of them he is treating, was influenced greatly by the writing of Henry Bullinger, whose vicious defamations of the Anabaptists have happily been exposed by modern research.

Crime and Punishment

BUT there is one thing in Calvin's argument at this point that goes

far to make good his error at the historic point. It is this. Calvin has the rare good insight to see that, whenever God punishes, He is a disciplinarian who *makes the punishment fit the crime*.

Calvin felt that the Anabaptist movement constituted a dire threat to the economic order of his day. (Once more, we are tempted to look into this opinion. The "community of wives," of "goods," to which Bullinger added even "the community of offspring," calls for debunking if anything ever did. But this is not the place for it.) And the beauty of it is that Calvin turns to rebuke sins committed at this same economic front. This is a rare insight, which we do well always to keep in mind. Because we do not discipline ourselves at the economic front, therefore God allows Satan to

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"redoubler le desordre que nous ne corrigeons point" (to increase the disorder which we do not correct.)

Would we had the good insight into the rules of God's housekeeping, to feel intuitively, as Calvin did, that if a God-permitted scourge develops, we had better examine ourselves whether unconfessed sin *at that front* exists. Then if we see in modern Communism an acid that is biting into our economic order, we will have the good sense to take inventory of that order, to "see if there be any wicked way" in us.

In Calvin's Tradition

HAPPILY, some Calvinists have not forgotten Calvin's technique, so Biblically and psychologically sound. An article from the pen of one of the ministers of the Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands, shows that for some people Calvin did not write his tract in vain. The article is by Dr. J. N. Hommes, appearing in the March, 1950 number of *Bezinning*.

In this article Dr. Hommes deals with the problem of corporate guilt. After speaking of group guilt for the atrocities committed by the Nazis, a guilt in which every German has a part (although a not equally great part), and a guilt which he says Christians ought to be the first to acknowledge, he goes on to say (I translate):

"This is the case also with respect to group guilt touching the social question, which came to the fore in the nineteenth century through the rise of modern industrialization.

"Then developed also the right-of-fist of capitalism and the political liberalism, which thought of the masses as born with saddles on their backs, and itself as privileged ones born with spurs on the feet so as to be able to ride on them. The rise of Socialism and of Communism as a protest against the brutal facts to which the dispossessed masses were delivered up was, historically considered, inevitable. And he who sees in the nineteenth century leaders of the proletariat no more than scheming rabble-rousers, understands but little of the powers of resistance which a trampled sense of justice can

call forth and did call forth. With the sedate possessor class a general numbness obtained, an unruffled reposing in things as they were. Barring a few exceptions, Christians were likewise afflicted with callousness. Christians also, by their betrayals and transgressions touching possessions, contributed their part to the situation. They too did not see, to put it in Amos' words, how the poor were being jockeyed for a pair of shoes.

"What background did the exodus of many of the Secessionists to America have if not a virtually helpless misery and pauperism? (It is an interesting fact that in a letter to Brummelkamp, Dr. A. C. Van Raalte urges the former to come to America too for the reason that God's vengeance over the evil situation described by Hommes will no doubt fall soon and heavily upon a sinful land. If he will come now, Van Raalte argues, Brummelkamp can still get from under. L. V.)

"It is," continues Hommes, "easy, and cheap, to take it out on the past. We must guard against doing this, as much as to guard against glorifying the present. Let us look at the brute facts soberly.

"And they are these. Socialism and Communism have cast a false light on the social problem. And they do that still.

"But most Christians have cast virtually no light upon it at all. With eyes shut tight they have detoured around the matter. Their ears were simply deaf to the Biblical thunderclap concerning social sins.

"And the few men who did see and hear what God's Word has to say, have had a difficult row to hoe before they were understood in their battle for social justice . . .

"We know by experience that it won't do to say that 'enlightened self-interest is the best guarantee for communal well-being.' The motto, 'as the rose adorns itself it adorns the garden the while' was too perspicuous.

"Nineteenth century individualism has roared itself out and has sealed its own death warrant. But we of the twentieth are left with the storm damage on our hands.

"And if it be true that God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation, and if we apply this to the matter in hand, then we shall begin to see the struggle of our times at the social front in another light.

"He who ponders this will see in socialism, and in communism something more than a human, all too human protest against past exploitation of the economically weak.

"These political and social power formations are at the same time God's judgment for the sins of the fathers of the nineteenth century with their merciless dictatorship of liberalistic capitalism. That in the present communistic threat, to be concrete, we have to do with God's judgment over frightful possessor-crimes (*bezitsmisdaden*) of the nineteenth century is so very little realized among us. Walter Schubart is right when he says that in the godless communism of Russia God is letting Europe see its own soiled and dirty face. And who is aware of it? Those few who do see it, and so openly are forthwith rapped on the knuckles!

"Communism has two sides, which we must distinguish carefully if our position is to be sound. Communism is first of all an awful attempt to cast out the social devil by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. The remedy is a hundred times worse than the disease, and we shall have to resist this monster state with all that is in us.

"This fact has creedal status among us.

"But communism has a second aspect, namely, that it is God's ultimatum to our whole modern world, directed to Europe and America and all the rest. And this ultimatum reads: 'Come clear at long last and break radically with an individualistic Roman idea of possession, and construct spontaneously and voluntarily new social forms, forms in which the idea of community will be a reality.'

"This is God's ultimatum, urging us to bid farewell, not as by constraint but voluntarily, to a society that lived by the legend 'Every man for himself and God for us all,' or by its still more brutal variant, 'Every man for himself and may the devil take the hindmost.'

"In this way communism and Marxism are comparable with the tyrant-imperialist Cyrus of Isaiah 45, who was

raised up by God to subdue the nations before Him. . .

"If we are ever to arrive at a sense of sin in the social sphere, we shall have to get rid of the narcotic of an individualistic conception of property. Here, too, it is a matter of getting to know how great our 'sins and miseries are,' and how great those of our predecessors."

And Now . . . ?

NOT every person in the Gereformeerde Kerken will be equally enthusiastic about Dr. Hommes' construction. But it must be recognized that he raises problems to which the Calvinist cannot be indifferent. And it is gratifying to note that Calvinists are, as indeed they should, addressing themselves to these problems.

Who will now set forth in good plain talk just what this "individualistic Roman idea of possession" is? And who will show us how to "construct . . . new social forms in which the idea of community will be a reality"?

The Bible has some potent passages with which one might begin in such a study.

Geert Boer's Advice to the Examiners

THE General Assembly (Algemeene Vergadering) was due to be held in Chicago, the month of June, 1877.

Announcement of the meeting appeared from the hand of Docent Geert E. Boer in *De Wachter* of April 26, the same year.

Professor Boer couldn't let the thing go with a bare announcement. He made mention of important matters that were to be considered, called attention to the heavy responsibilities resting upon the churches, exhorted to prayer, and offered advice.

* * *

THERE was one thing that gave Professor Boer particular concern. It was the examination of the Theological students. In those days, as now, the examination of theological graduates who were to become candidates for the ministry, was undertaken by the major Church assembly. That was coming up in June. Two students — G. Broene (father of Prof. Johannes Broene) and G. Hoeksema — were to be examined.

Boer had sat through those examinations before. He knew what they could be like. This time he was more directly concerned. Since March 15, 1876, Broene and Hoeksema had been his students. It had been his duty to prepare them for the holy office of the ministry. Now they were to be examined.

There was no worry, apparently, about what the examinations might disclose concerning his teaching. Nor did

he seem to worry much about his students — although he was sympathetic enough to hope they wouldn't be subjected to a wearying inquisition.

He was worried about something, though. He was worried about the Examiners. They were really on the spot. They had to ask the questions. And as a teacher Boer knew that it is often harder to ask good questions than to give good answers. And he knew, too, that often questions show more about the questioners than answers show about the answerers.

Yessir! Those Examiners were going to have their hands full. Boer worried about them.

Would they ask good questions? Would they know how to probe for the essentials of knowledge? Would they try to draw out the mind and conviction? Would their questions show they had some sense of the meaning and objective of a theological training, some sense of what one must look for in a minister of the Word of God?

Would the "Synodical" Examiners pass the test?

Boer was a bit worried.

* * *

SO Boer gave some advice to the Examiners. He said:

"Let also the forthcoming examination of theological students be a matter of prayer and of painstaking preparation. The students are there not to be *harrassed*, but to be *examined*. The questions are not to be *counted*; they

are to be *weighed*. One shouldn't wander about in a too wide circle, but get down into the heart of things."

That man Boer had it right!

How to examine — that's the problem.

How to question — that's the question.

The Church is responsible for her ministry. If she is to discharge that responsibility she must know what the ministry is, and what, in consequence, she is to look for and inquire after in those who are candidates for that ministry.

The Church comes to an important exercise of that responsibility when she is called upon to examine men in order to determine their fitness for that ministry.

* * *

IN the examination the student is on trial. We have perhaps been too inclined to think that's the long and short of it. Curatorium too! But there is more.

Come examination time, and the Church is on trial!

And the Examiners carry a large part of the weight of it. Boer thought of that when he looked forward to the General Assembly which was to convene in June 1877.

No wonder the saintly, discerning Professor counselled: "Let also the forthcoming examination of theological students be a matter of prayer and of painstaking preparation."

— GEORGE STOB

TEACHERS' SALARIES

SOME straight talk has to be talked about teachers' salaries.

In a way it is not nice for a teacher to be talking about this. A teacher ought, presumably, to have the courtesy of a minister, who, when it comes time to fix his salary at the congregational meeting, gets up and leaves the room. Just so teachers who talk about salaries, and agitate for a raise, seem by that token to be "in it" for the money to be gotten out of it.

Our people do not like to think that this is so. They are inclined to dislike it when teachers talk salaries. They feel that it hurts the cause of Christian education. Even though they understand the teacher's circumstance, they prefer to have the agitation for higher salaries come from the administrators, and school boards, and such, and not from the teachers themselves.

Now there is something fine about that. There is something profoundly right about it. Our people look upon the teaching in our schools as Kingdom work, and they want to believe that the teachers look upon it as such, and that they therefore love to be engaged in it. Our people, consequently, think that it comes in bad grace for Kingdom workers to be agitating for money. They feel that there is in Kingdom work another spirit—a spirit of sacrifice, of idealism, of selflessness, a spirit not of this world, certainly not of mammon—the spirit, in fact, of Christ. It is this spirit which sanctifies and ennobles the work of the Kingdom, and it is this spirit which brings its own reward. To talk about money in such connections seems almost tantamount to a minister's calling for a fee before administering the sacraments.

Our people are profoundly right about that, and the teacher is glad to acknowledge it. He knows that the joy of his work lies in its service, that his glory is the office of his calling, and that the possibility of making his work a form of worship comes from his *vocation* in the good old historic Christian sense. No Christian teacher, consequently, wants to think of himself as being "in the teaching game," or hoping for "a better deal" next year, or as "making more money" at Paterson than he is able to "make" at Bellflower. His work

is most certainly Kingdom work, and to talk thus secularly about it is to walk into the throne room with muddy shoes.

But to stop at that point: Mister, it won't do at all. It is so bad, as a matter of fact, that it is nicely calculated to rob the precious concept of Kingdom work of all its mighty force. Kingdom work, though it cannot get along without ecclesiastical activity, is not to be limited to church work. Kingdom work is not to be limited to ministers, missionaries, and Christian school teachers. Ours is on all fronts and at all times, as the French say, *a religion engagée*. Our profession is that we build the Kingdom in all our works and ways, and that if we in any of our work we do not build it, that work is evil and of the world.

It is this that the Christian teacher does not like. He does not like to think that he is peculiar in his Christian service. He does not want to suppose that he, together with the minister of the Gospel and the missionary, has by virtue of his calling a special obligation to idealism, sacrifice, privation, and selflessness. He wants to feel just as close to the Christian business man as he does to the Christian minister. Or, to put it more exactly, he wants the Christian business man to feel just as close to the minister in common Kingdom work as the teacher feels himself to be. What the teacher dislikes, in short, is not that his salary is low, but that it reflects a sort of Christian approval of the secular dualism between Kingdom work and other work. He wants his salary to reflect the fact that

in his Christian community there is only Kingdom work and no other kind at all.

This, the teacher feels, is a serious dualism, which has more of the quality of Romanism in it than it has of the practical Christianity of Calvinism. It divides life into the sacred and the secular. The devastating upshot of it is that pretty soon such things as business, economics, science, politics, and such, are looked upon as merely "technical" so far as offering opportunity for serving the Lord is concerned. That leaves ecclesiastical activity as the area for Kingdom work. The church, the missions, and the Christian schools then constitute a sort of "island of idealism" in a secular world, an "oasis of sacrificial service" in a desert of secularism.

No, the teacher has no desire to slip into the secular ways of a business civilization. He does not want to disavow idealism, sacrifice, or selfless service. He does not want to substitute profit for purpose. He wants that other spirit to govern and control. He has no mind to organize. He refuses to use pressure. He will not conduct a strike, sit-down or any other. He loves to be engaged in his Kingdom work. But this too: he refuses to join a religious order. He does not think of himself as unique in serving a Kingdom cause. He thinks everybody else is in it with him. And he thinks, for the good of all concerned, that his salary ought to reflect a community acknowledgement of that equal obligation.

— Henry Zylstra

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